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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES TIP WITH HOME MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador David C. Mulford for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Meeting on March 9, the Ambassador again urged Home Minister Shivraj Patil to focus more on the trafficking issue in order to avoid the downgrading of India from the Tier 2 Special Watch List to Tier 3 in June, which could set in motion a series of unfortunate and restrictive developments in US-India relations.

12. (C) Commenting that he had raised this issue in January during his last meeting with the Minister along with Senator Bingaman and Congressman Faleomavaega, the Ambassador stressed that with the June deadline looming, the GOI should consider the ramifications seriously. It was already March, and US legislation was specific on the kinds of steps the USG would have to take in the event of a TIP downgrading, including at multilateral lending agencies. The Ambassador noted that the USG would then have few choices, which could impact negatively on bilateral ties and which both countries wanted to avoid.

13. (C) Acknowledging the TIP problem, the Home Minister attributed it to India's huge population, a "conservative" population that did not treat the issue as urgently as in "more liberal countries," and uneven levels of development countrywide, as well as deep poverty in neighboring countries from which many trafficked persons originated. Patil reported that several bills currently before the Parliament would improve GOI ability to investigate and prosecute traffickers. One bill would amend the Penal Code to improve witness protection measures. Another would facilitate investigation and prosecution of those who traffic in persons. The GOI was fully behind these changes in existing law.

14. (C) Patil apprised the Ambassador about a conference of Chief Ministers planned for after the Budget Session recess beginning on March 23 at which he would take up the trafficking issue. He acknowledged that this alone would "not solve the problem," but since many responsibilities for addressing the trafficking problem reside at the state level in India, it was necessary to focus Chief Ministers on it for full cooperation.

15. (C) The Home Minister returned to the trafficking issue at the end of the meeting, which also covered Kashmir and the Naxalite/Nepal nexus (septel), asking again to receive any concrete suggestions about how the GOI could better address this problem. D/Polcouns drew attention to a proposal the MHA has been tasked to draft for expanded US-India law enforcement training and cooperation against traffickers. The Ambassador stressed that this kind of activity would be a clear demonstration of GOI resolve, and was in Patil's area of responsibility.

MULFORD